



Dear Parent/Carer,

We are writing to inform you that your child is now using a structured handwriting programme called Nelson Handwriting. As with reading and spelling, handwriting can be practised at home as regular reinforcement of key concepts will support children's development in this area.

Handwriting needs to be taught in a consistent way. From the earliest stages, children will be developing their fine motor skills when they pick up writing tools and make marks on paper. This should be encouraged and opportunities provided for children to scribble, draw, colour and develop other early writing skills. However, it is important for children to develop good habits with writing and pencil hold and formation are important parts of this process.

When your child writes, we encourage you to reinforce the "tripod" grip through modelling and correction where necessary (please ask for tips on how to do this). This pencil grip gives children the most control over the movement of their writing tool. When children are beginning to form letters, we teach them to follow set formation (generally starting at the top of the letters). Once a child can form their letters correctly, joined writing is introduced. When starting to join, we teach clear joins which aid fluency and accuracy in writing.



Here are some general points to note:

- The word cursive means joined.
- The letters b, d, h, k and l are called ascenders. The top of the letter should reach very close to the top line (it shouldn't touch).
- The letter "t" is not an ascender. It is an unusual letter, a three-quarter letter rather than an ascender.
- The letters g, j, p, q and y are called descenders. The tail of these letters goes below the line.
- Letters that end at the top join horizontally: f, o, r, t, v, w, x
- Letters that end at the bottom join diagonally: a, c, d, e, h, i, k, l, m, n, u
- Letters that are not joined: b, g, j, p, q, y, z. These are not joined because they either end in the opposite direction (left) to the direction



of writing (right) or end in a position too awkward for joining legibly.

- We don't teach a loop for the letters "g" and "y". These letters end to the left so it is more consistent for them not to be joined. Children who loop these letters often then contrive other unsuitable loops.
- Capital letters are NOT joined and should not be huge. They should be no higher than ascenders.

In school, we are checking the following in all subjects:

- Are all letters the same size?
- Are all the down strokes parallel?
- Are the height and length of ascenders regular?
- Is the space between letters even? Is spacing between words even?
- Is the writing a reasonable size?
- Are numbers formed correctly and evenly sized?
- Could presentation be improved?

There are other ways in which you can help support development of your child's handwriting:

- Pointing out letters which have a similar formation e.g. c, a, o, d, g, q all start in the same way
- Model writing key words (such as names) using correct letter formation and joins as appropriate for the level of your child's progression e.g. your child's name starts with a capital letter and capital letters do not join.
- Praising good effort in handwriting, especially if the error is a "reasonable" attempt before correcting any mistake.
- Encouraging other development of fine motor skills such as colouring in or drawing as well as giving ample opportunity to write.

If you have any queries about any of these matters, please feel free to ask at school for more information.

Miss Irwin
(English Subject Leader)